



***Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
January 21-25, 2013***

Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence in hospital on IV following decision to end protest

[Toronto Star](#)

January 24, 2013

Joanna Smith



*FRED CHARTRAND/THE CANADIAN PRESS
Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence takes part in a drum ceremony before departing a Ottawa hotel to attend a ceremonial meeting at Rideau Hall with Gov. Gen. David Johnston in Ottawa, Friday January 11, 2013.*

OTTAWA—Chief [Theresa Spence](#) is in hospital on an intravenous drip following her decision to end her liquids-only fast, her spokesman said Thursday morning.

Danny Metatawabin told reporters on Victoria Island, where Spence had been living in a teepee since launching her hunger protest on Dec. 11, that the chief from the remote northern Ontario community of [Attawapiskat](#) was in hospital for tests.

"She's fine but her body is weak," Metatawabin told reporters in an exchange broadcast on live television.

Spence therefore missed a news conference scheduled for 11 a.m. Thursday in Ottawa. She was also likely to miss ceremonial events planned later in the day to mark the end of her fast and celebrate her accomplishments at having brought further attention to First Nations issues and the grassroots Idle No More movement.

Spence had been surviving on broth, medicinal teas and vitamins for 44 days.

Spence issued a statement Thursday morning confirming that she and Raymond Robinson, an elder from Cross Lake First Nation in Manitoba, were ending their fasts.

"We end our hunger strikes with signed commitments from elected First Nations leaders and opposition parties to urgently carry forward our action plan which ensure that our Treaty Rights are recognized, honoured and fully implemented. Furthermore, we are still calling for an immediate meeting with the Crown, Federal and Provincial governments in order to renew and reset this volatile relationship. Indigenous Peoples have lived well below the poverty line in a country that considered one of the wealthiest in the world," Spence said.

"We are no longer idle and precedence has been established over this past six weeks. There's no going back, our voices have been heard and now I ask for your involvement to move our agenda forward," Spence added.

Spence also thanked supporters for their prayers and encouragement.

"Both Raymond and I have taken with us a deep spiritual experience which has lit a fire that will assist us in implementing our vision where First Nation Peoples have equality and can forge their own destiny," Spence said in the statement.

The key to ending Spence's liquids-only protest, which reached its 44th day on Wednesday, was a declaration of commitment supported by the national executive committee of the Assembly of First Nations, the Native Women's Association of Canada and the federal NDP and Liberal caucuses among others.

"We fully commit to carry forward the urgent and co-ordinated action required until concrete and tangible results are achieved in order to allow First Nations to forge their own destiny," reads an excerpt from the preamble to the draft version of the document, obtained by the Star on Wednesday evening.

The declaration includes 13 specific demands, several of them echoing what the national executive of the Assembly of First Nations brought into its meeting with Prime Minister Stephen Harper and other members of cabinet on Jan. 11, such as making sure that omnibus budget implementation Bills C-38 and C-45 comply with Section 35 of the Canadian constitution. (Section 35 covers aboriginal and treaty rights.)

One of the new demands is for an immediate meeting between Governor-General David Johnston, the federal and provincial governments, and First Nations.

Spence had originally vowed to continue avoiding solid foods until she could meet both Harper and Johnston at the same time.

First Nations job numbers 'appalling', economist says



[CBC News](#)

Jan 21, 2013 4:13 PM CST

Economist Eric Howe says Saskatchewan's economy is losing billions of dollars due to underemployment of First Nations. (CBC)

A new report says employment of First Nations in Saskatchewan is seriously lagging.

"Our employment record of First Nations people is — frankly the word is appalling," Eric Howe, a professor at the University of Saskatchewan, said Monday.

Howe, an economics professor, found that in 2006, 58.6 per cent of the province's First Nations population, aged 15 - 69, did not have a high school diploma. He compared that to 29.9 per cent of the total population with no high school diploma.

The education gap, Howe found, is having an impact when First Nations enter the job market.

Ronald Gaskin, a Saskatoon student currently in Grade 12, says education is key to finding even a service-industry job.

"Education is everything," Gaskin told CBC News Monday. "Some places you even have to get your Grade 11, close to a Grade 11 just to work at McDonald's."

Howe says First Nations are underemployed in some key Saskatchewan industries, such as mining and provincial Crown corporations, such as SaskPower.

"Those two industries are notable just because of this difference between public relations and reality," Howe said. "First Nations people are not getting employed in those industries."

According to Howe, improving First Nations employment will lead to economic gains for the province, with an estimated value — by him — of some \$20 billion over 20 years.

Howe described First Nations as a valuable resource that is being ignored.

According to Howe's research, Saskatchewan lags behind Alberta and Manitoba when it comes to aboriginal workers finding a job.

Howe noted the province recently ended an aboriginal employment program while launching a program geared for newcomers.

Simon Bird, a vice-chief with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, called the situation a crisis.

"If we don't invest in our people now, our First Nations people, we are losing out not only for our people but for everybody in Saskatchewan," Bird said.

According to Howe, some of the information in his report is based upon 2006 census details and could not be updated because the census of 2011 did not use a long form for data collection.

B.C. First Nation asks court to block Canada-China deal: Hupacasath First Nation says Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Act guts resource rights

[The Canadian Press](#)

Jan 22, 2013 9:36 AM ET

A B.C. First Nation has asked the Federal Court to stop Canada from ratifying an investment treaty with China until it and other bands have been consulted.

In documents filed with the court in Vancouver, the Hupacasath First Nation said the Canada-China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Act, or FIPPA, would gut its aboriginal right to resources subject to foreign investment.

Councillor Brenda Sayers said Monday the band is seeking the injunction because Chinese investors would ultimately control major assets such as coal on its 232,000-hectare territory.

She said extraction of resources by foreign firms would strip negotiating powers for First Nations such as hers, which are involved in the treaty process.



Prime Minister Stephen Harper met with then-Chinese President Hu Jintao during his visit to Beijing last February. A B.C. First Nation is seeking an injunction to block the foreign investment deal announced during Harper's trip to China. (Adrian Wyld/Canadian Press)

"Some modern treaties negotiated with British Columbia and Canada address Canada's obligation to consult prior to

entering into international agreements which may affect treaty rights," the notice of application says.

"The government proceeded without any input from First Nations, or Canadians for that matter, so this isn't just a First Nations fight. It just so happens that First Nations are one of the parties that can stop the FIPPA," Sayers said.

"The other party is the premiers of each province who have not stepped up to the plate."

Other First Nations support injunction bid

The Conservative government has said FIPPA will benefit Canada by increasing trade and investment with China as its economy booms to the point of becoming the largest in the world.

Sayers said the deal is troubling because there's been no formal debate in the House of Commons and Conservative MPs voted down a motion that would have allowed scrutiny by expert witnesses.

The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, the Chiefs of Ontario and the Serpentine River First Nation in Ontario are also supporting the injunction.

The Canada-China deal would last for 31 years and was set to be ratified late last year, but public pressure has been building against it from people concerned about the environment and potential job losses.

The Canadian Labour Congress has also called for a public debate on the agreement Canada negotiated with China last September, saying it would have a huge impact on labour markets and labour rights.

Gus Van Harten, an international trade law expert from Osgoode Hall Law School, has filed an affidavit in the case, saying the treaty may be unconstitutional because state-owned Chinese companies would be allowed to dispute laws and regulations passed by provinces.

First Nations Snowboarder Trenton Louie on top at Slopestyle

[Vancouver Sun](#)

January 24, 2013 12:35 PM

Mary Frances Hill



*Trenton Louie of the Westbank First Nation placed first at the B.C. Snowboard Provincial Series Slopestyle competition at Sun Peaks Resort last weekend. **Photograph by:** FNST, Screengrab*

The First Nations Snowboard club has claimed one of its own as one of the winners at Sun Peaks' slopestyle snowboard competition.

Trenton Louie of the Westbank First Nation placed first at the B.C. Snowboard Provincial Series Slopestyle competition at Sun Peaks Resort last weekend.

The events, sponsored by the B.C. Snowboard Association, give amateur athletes a chance to improve their skills, and compete to qualify for FIS points, which in turn qualifies them for Canada Snowboard Nationals.

The First Nations Snowboard Team offers coaching for recreational and high-performance snowboarders. It consists of 12 provincial teams and includes more than 200 athletes from across B.C.

The non-profit organization 2010 Legacies Now, which has worked closely with the team's development and funding, was awarded a Vancouver 2010 Sustainability Star for its partnership with the team.

The First Nations Snowboard Team is the first such organization in the country to develop, support and encourage First Nations snowboarders.

Since it was founded in 2004, the First Nations Snowboard Team has attracted nearly 450 members from more than 12 Nations across B.C., Alberta and Washington State.

The FNST offers a season pass, equipment and coaching for recreational and high-performance snowboarders of varying abilities, along with youth leadership and instructor-training programs. Much of its funds are raised through the Aboriginal Youth Sport Legacy fund.

FNST athletes come from Kamloops Indian band, Lil'wat Nation, Tulalip Tribes, Prince George Friendship Centre, Squamish Nation, Westbank, West Moberly, Saulteau, Tsuu Tina and Sts'Ailes First Nations, among others.

The First Nations Snowboard Team receives funding from Royal Bank of Canada and the Aboriginal Youth Sport Legacy Fund.

For more on the First Nations Snowboard team visit fnriders.com.

© Copyright (c) Postmedia News

Businesses advised to get First Nations cultural training: Sudbury Chamber of Commerce speaker says companies need to understand First Nations culture first

CBC News

Jan 23, 2013 12:37 PM ET



Sachigo Lake First Nation members clean up around abandoned fuel tanks at the old Lingman Lake mine site near their community. (Allyne Glidden)

Sudbury business people gathered Tuesday to hear how they can better work with First Nations.

As Idle No More continues to make headlines, there was talk of how that movement

may change the way business is conducted.

Members of the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce heard from Stan Wesley, who is originally from the Moose Factory First Nation and offers cultural training to mining companies and others that work in Aboriginal communities.

Wesley spoke about how poverty among First Nations was a sign resources from the land were not being shared properly with them.

"We all have a responsibility ... to ensure that the original promise — which is that we're all going to share — is fulfilled," he said.

'Start communicating more'

Wesley added companies need to do more to understand First Nations culture before working in their territory.

One of his clients is Detour Gold, which has mining operations in northern Ontario.

A vice-president with the company said companies try to provide jobs on reserves, but cultural differences can get in the way. Workers sometimes need time off to hunt to feed their communities.

Rachel Pineault acknowledged that, to her, the Idle No More movement is about listening.

"That movement is actually an opportunity for people to start communicating more," she said.

Working through their cultural differences may help businesses who need to hire local aboriginal people — particularly in light of the current shortage of skilled trade workers.

E-books show kids the colour of Cree language

Phys.org

January 24, 2013

Bev Betkowski



Caylie Gnyra turned her native studies class project into a series of free electronic books for Cree language teachers across Alberta. Credit: Richard Siemens

During her Cree language classes at the University of Alberta, Caylie Gnyra had to translate sentences posted by her instructor, Dorothy Thunder.

Struck by the whimsy of one of the lines, Gnyra, who graduated in 2010 from the U of A Faculty of Native Studies, adopted it for a class project that has since turned into an online tool for Cree language teachers across Alberta.

"What Colour Are Your Little Ducks?/Tân'sesinâkosiwak kiśiśîpimisiwâwak" became the title of an electronic book that Gnyra created for a class project, and that has inspired more e-books that have just gone online free of charge at www.littlecreebooks.com.

With some funding through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada via the Faculty of Native Studies, Gnyra designed the cheery, colourful book to introduce young learners to a string of characters and their rainbow-hued pet ducks.

The book has Plains Cree text written in Standard Roman Orthography—the letters used when writing in English—and syllabics, as well as their English translations.

Gnyra wanted to develop material that could be used for little cost in Cree classrooms throughout the province, viewed on [SMART boards](#) for group reading, printed off for individual use, or even viewed on tablets and smartphones at home.

She has since created two more such books: one about the seasons, written for a Grade 1 reading level, and one about the daily activities of a young bear, for [kindergarten children](#). Both are designed to mesh with the province's established Cree language education curriculum. Gnyra hopes that instructors of other Algonquian languages will adapt the books to reflect the grammar and vocabulary of those languages, which are closely related to Cree.

Though she is not Aboriginal and is still learning to speak and write Cree herself, Gnyra is enchanted by the cultural nuances of the language and feels deeply committed to helping preserve it.

"Cree is a very pretty language to the ear and it has a lot of humorous or thought-provoking aspects. Learning it helps me recognize how culture really is embedded in all languages, including English."

A self-described introvert, Gnyra also appreciates the many ways that Cree culture values and facilitates introspection. "North American culture tends to promote and validate extroversion, so I think one of the reasons I am so interested in spending time learning about Cree culture and language is that I feel like that very integral part of me is valued."

Her dedication to exploring Cree language and culture was kindled by an interest in social justice.

"While many Canadians are concerned about inequality, injustice and related social issues in other countries, a lot of us just don't know the details of the difficult history we share with our indigenous neighbours or we don't quite know where to start in terms of improving Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations," she said.

After earning a degree in English from The King's University College, Gnyra worked with various Aboriginal communities and organizations through a provincial leadership program, with the Native Cultural Arts Museum in northern Alberta and with indigenous youth in South America.

"I learned a lot about my own position and assumptions, as well as about relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and I wanted to gain more historic context for what I had seen and experienced and heard people talk about."

Gnyra enrolled in the U of A's two-year after-degree program in Native Studies, then postponed her graduation for a year to participate in a student internship at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., and take a third year of Cree language classes at the U of A.

After graduating, Gnyra went on to take a master's degree in museum studies in Toronto, where she did some work for the newly established Canadian Language Museum. In keeping with her advocacy for the Cree language, she asked for and

received permission to prepare a related exhibit, which she hopes will be ready for 2015, after she consults with Cree elders, speakers and learners.

"An exhibit like this provides an opportunity to share some of the fascinating, humorous and unique aspects of this language. I hope it encourages people to take an interest in learning the language, whether it is their heritage language or not, and ultimately support greater understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people."

Meanwhile, Gnyra hopes to add at least five more e-books to the lineup of her Cree readers, one each for grades 2 through 6. She envisions the Little Cree Books site as a resource dedicated to the unique grammatical rules that make sense when learning Cree.

She also hopes to attract Cree and non-Cree contributors to the project who can share their ideas, artwork and writing.

As she moves forward, Gnyra is grateful for her time at the U of A.

"More than anywhere else I've studied, my Native Studies degree and my elective classes in other faculties at the U of A fostered a love of learning for me. It has boosted my self-esteem and well-being to find something that I felt I could really invest in, and just run with it, with the support of my faculty."

Finger-pointing at Attawapiskat more than a little hypocritical: Look at what goes on outside reserves before making a judgment

[Vancouver Sun](#)

January 25, 2013 3:09 AM

Stephen Hume



*The Attawapiskat administration under Chief Theresa Spence has come under fire for over-spending. Unmentioned is the fact the band's finances were co-managed by Ottawa. **Photograph by:** Ryan Remiorz, The Canadian Press, Vancouver Sun*

One need not agree with Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence's attempt to coerce others' behaviour by harming herself to be disgusted by the reactions she has received.

Her claim of a witch hunt has credibility when one examines the more venomous criticism. It ranges from contemptible comments about her weight to the nasty cud of racism in the form of regurgitated statistics carefully selected to distort perceptions.

Take, for example, the unsolicited email purporting to reveal endemic corruption on Indian reserves, in particular the administration of Attawapiskat under Chief Spence.

First, let's examine an assertion that the federal government has spent \$90 million in Attawapiskat since 2006. This spending works out to about \$10,000 per resident per year, notes the faith group Kairos, which has been crunching the numbers. A community like Attawapiskat differs from Vancouver in that the federal government has responsibility for all those services that in other communities are provided by both municipal and provincial governments.

So let's turn to Statistics Canada and see what the spending is per individual in other cities, where it is spread across three levels of government. Gosh, according to the federal government, average spending per person is more than \$12,500.

In other words, that exorbitant spending in Attawapiskat actually lags spending on those of us living in, say, Shaughnessy, by \$2,500 a year.

The difference can be much higher in major urban centres where voters live. Spending on the average Torontonians, for example, is estimated by blogger Lorraine Land of the Toronto law firm Othuis, Kleer, Townshend, to be about \$24,000 per year. In Vancouver, add federal expenditures per person to provincial and municipal spending and the basic arithmetic yields about \$20,000 per year per person.

Please, a little less quacking about gross over-spending on First Nations.

Well, why don't First Nations members relocate from reserves to find jobs? Um, they do. About 75 per cent of people who define themselves as First Nations now live off-reserve.

Next, the accusation that corrupt chiefs line their pockets, an assumption propelled by that audit of Attawapiskat posted by Ottawa earlier this month.

The received wisdom is that accounting practices were in shambles and the federal government was forced to insert a third-party manager to regain control.

Unmentioned is the fact that the band's finances were being co-managed by Ottawa. Or that the audit also says that so much progress had been made that the default situation was considered remedied by early 2012.

Then there's the Federal Court ruling last August that "financial management was not the problem" at Attawapiskat, that the band was making progress on the implementation of a 2011 remedial management plan brought in by Spence, and that the federal government's appointment of a third-party manager was "unreasonable in all the circumstances of this case."

Furthermore, the judge notes that in the rush to impose the outside manager to sort out the alleged financial mismanagement he said wasn't the source of the problem,

federal authorities could produce "little in the way of any contemporaneous notes in the record" showing how or why the decision was reached.

Shoddy record-keeping, it appears, is not merely a problem for small First Nations communities with less expertise than Ottawa.

In addition, the auditor-general reports that over the past decade, federal government agencies responsible for managing First Nations finances "have not made satisfactory progress in implementing our recommendations." It appears that even as the accounting practices were improving at Attawapiskat, they were deteriorating in Ottawa.

Meanwhile, if one wants inept government, try B.C. Over the last 20 years, we've had one premier resign in a conflict of interest with developers, another after skimming charities was uncovered, another after a scandal when somebody associated with a gambling application provided personal services, and yet another was convicted of drunk driving. Federally, we've had improper practices revealed in campaign finances during the 2006 election, scandals over awarding of contracts and so on, and a large investigation into alleged election irregularities is still underway.

In Vancouver, we've had a convention centre that came in at six times its originally estimated cost of \$100 million or so. Taxpayers forked over \$600 million to replace the roof on a football stadium that keeps 30,000 fans dry about nine times a year (based on average attendance, that's about \$220 a ticket per game over the next decade).

Not to mention a murky government decision to pay the legal bills of a couple of former government apparatchiks whose guilty pleas coincidentally meant high-ranking politicians wouldn't have to testify in court.

Are there some crooks on Indian reserves? Undoubtedly. Are there more than there are elsewhere? Highly debatable.

Meanwhile, that lax (but improving) accounting at Attawapiskat looks pretty trivial next to what goes on in the mainstream.

shume@islandnet.com

© Copyright (c) The Vancouver Sun